

What ails the Pacific and what are the remedies? These are perennial and much debated questions for Islanders and their principal aid donors. A conventional diagnosis focuses on the tyrannies of distance and small economies of scale. This perspective has prompted the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) to revisit the merits of deepening regionalism as a means to overcome national weaknesses. To this end the past year has seen agreement on wide-ranging reform of the Forum to facilitate regional integration and cooperation.

Another long-standing school of thought attributes blame for contemporary ills on the economic and political structures imposed by departing colonial powers and their uneasy coexistence with tradition. One way of rectifying, or at least mitigating, negative aspects of this legacy is the donor-inspired agenda to promote good governance, notably to tackle corruption. The ubiquitous practice of corruption is an ongoing preoccupation of aid donors, Pacific leaders, and civil society, yet policies to combat it have delivered variable outcomes. A recent study of corruption in the Pacific recommends a change in strategy.

In the security domain, violent conflicts have arisen in the Pacific for a range of reasons (see von Strokirch 2001), but there is no doubt that the impact of these conflicts has been more profound and their duration

prolonged as a result of access to guns. The proliferation of small arms and their illicit use has to date been most marked in Melanesia. Nevertheless, throughout the Pacific the potential for conflicts involving arms must be prevented with effective regional action rather than just reaction to crises after they occur. The scope of the problem, lessons from past conflicts, and the merits of emerging international strategies are assessed here.

Developments concerning health trends are rarely addressed in any depth in this annual review, but the pandemic of HIV/AIDS warrants an exception to the rule. Current trends and risk factors suggest that the catastrophic impact of HIV/AIDS in Africa and Asia could be replicated in the Pacific. Unlike the recent tsunami in Asia, HIV/AIDS is not a natural disaster beyond human control. Rather it is predominantly a sexually transmitted infection, control of which is highly amenable to concerted prevention strategies. Notwithstanding delays in responding to the problem in the Pacific, the regional anti-HIV/AIDS campaign has recently gained momentum and substance at all levels of politics and civil society.

Regardless of ideological perspectives and associated whole of government prescriptions, there is widespread agreement on the profoundly negative impact of corruption, small arms, and HIV/AIDS on Pacific soci-

eties and economies. These trends are worsening and inexorably undermine—indeed cancel out—efforts to promote peace and development. All three issues have recently been addressed with varying degrees of commitment in global, regional, and donor strategies to enhance human security and development. The nature and efficacy of these strategies provide a thematic focus for analysis of this year in review. First, however the latest attempt to reform the preeminent regional institution warrants analysis.

On the initiative of the PIF chair, New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark, the 2003 leaders' meeting in Auckland mandated an Eminent Persons Group (EPG) to review the Pacific Islands Forum's role, function, and Secretariat. The Eminent Persons Group reported in April 2004 to a Pacific Islands Forum Special Leaders' Retreat, which in turn adopted its key recommendations in the *Auckland Declaration and Leaders' Decisions* (PIFSLR 2004). Most of the sixty-page EPG report provided a broad overview of diverse challenges facing the Pacific Islands region and as such was not stating anything controversial (EPG 2004). The same could be said of the resulting "Pacific Vision" to guide forum actions and policies. The vision was essentially a "motherhood statement" by leaders, typical of multilateral organizations, emphasizing the pursuit of security and prosperity, valuing of cultures, and promotion of good governance, sustainable development, democracy, and human rights (PIFSLR 2004, paragraph 1).

The EPG report made reference to the Pacific Way's acceptance of diversity and parallel commitment to unity

and consensus, yet simultaneously asserted the need to openly and respectfully deal with problems of governance (EPG 2004, 20). In doing so the Eminent Persons Group tried to strike an awkward balance between Pacific and metropolitan values and methods. Whereas Pacific Island leaders adhere to ASEAN-style principles of face-saving, consensus, and noninterference, Australia and New Zealand (and outside the Forum, the United States) have increasingly overridden these notions with an emphasis on effective intervention. As a result of the tension between these views, there was no mention of the Pacific Way in the leaders' declaration or decisions.

The proposal for a Pacific Plan clearly advocated deeper regional cooperation. A taskforce led by the PIF secretary-general and overseen by select leaders was to be set up after the 2004 Forum to develop the plan. In the first instance, the plan would identify sectors in which resources could be pooled and provide recommendations on the priorities (PIFSLR 2004). Previously there had been progress in developing regional policies in several domains such as nuclear issues, climate change, trade, and fisheries. The EPG report suggested areas where more cooperation could be fruitful, including transport, digital strategy, quarantine and customs, trade facilitation, financial systems, public administration, law enforcement, international representation, and compliance with new international laws.

With regard to security, the EPG report rightly noted that the relevant PIF declarations lack teeth and that conflict prevention must take priority

over conflict resolution, though the report failed to indicate how to proceed on this score. The leaders agreed with the Eminent Persons Group that the PIF secretary-general should take a more proactive role in coordinating responses to regional crises. However, the vague EPG proposal for leaders to consider developing a unique “model” for economic and political integration (echoing the Australian Senate Committee’s call in 2003 for a Political and Economic Community) was premature and thus omitted from the leaders’ decisions (EPG 2004, 23–24; see also von Strokirch 2004).

In a section entitled “Focus on People,” the EPG report advocated greater inclusiveness in the Forum’s regionalism. The document reiterated the newfound aid donor mantra of engaging women, youth, and civil society to address their concerns. In addition, it said the Forum should support members in developing national human-rights machinery. The group also made explicit recommendations for the Forum Secretariat to mainstream the needs of Small Island States into its work and for greater engagement with territories outside the Forum by granting them observer status (EPG 2004, 28–31). These recommendations were incorporated in the leaders’ decisions. The Eminent Persons Group had specifically called for all US and French dependencies to be integrated as Forum observers, yet it made no reference to the Indonesian territory of Papua. This omission was despite the fact that the Melanesians of Papua share a border with Papua New Guinea and have a long history of regionalism with Pacific neighbors dating back to the inaugural South Pacific Conference.

Immediate, specific, and concrete EPG recommendations, confirmed by Forum leaders, related to reforms of regional institutions. These include the secretary-general and chair’s positions; the Forum Secretariat; the Forum Officials’ Committee; respective meetings of Forum leaders, dialogue partners, and ministers; and the Council of Regional Organizations in the Pacific. The main aim was to clarify the mandates of agencies, streamline meetings, and delegate decision making to avoid duplication and bureaucratic inefficiency. They identified a paramount need to reverse the tendency for routine reporting and rubber-stamping of officials’ recommendations to dominate leaders’ meetings. Instead, Forum agendas, especially those of retreats, should focus on significant issues that require consideration and decisions by leaders. One issue not addressed was the burgeoning membership of the Post-Forum Dialogue and whether this risks reducing its relevance. Since Thailand’s admission in 2004 there are now thirteen dialogue partners. Yet, for the most part, the institutional reforms were constructive and achievable in the short term.

One issue that has increasingly occupied the attention of Forum leaders is corruption. The abuse of office for private gain is not unique to the Pacific Islands or to developing countries. For this reason a Global Convention Against Corruption was adopted by United Nations’ members for signature in 2003. For developing countries, corruption has nefarious ramifications for development, democracy, and accountability to aid donors. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan summed up its negative impact:

“Corruption hurts the poor disproportionately—by diverting funds intended for development, undermining a government’s ability to provide basic services, feeding inequality and injustice, and discouraging foreign investment and aid” (UNODC 2003, 4). Corruption is also associated with unsustainable exploitation of natural resources.

At a political level, corruption undermines the integrity of state institutions, including the government, judiciary, public service, and security forces. The corrosion of public trust and confidence leads to a deficit in state legitimacy and hence authority. On a social level, high levels of corruption among holders of public office undermine respect for the law and contribute to an escalation in crime. In democracies, particularly fledgling or transitional ones, corruption interferes with the proper functioning of democracy, notably in the threat it poses to fair elections and to accountability on the part of those elected to office. This leads to popular skepticism about the merits of democracy, although in reality undemocratic governments tend to have equally poor if not worse records of corruption.

Transparency International is a nongovernmental organization that has spearheaded global and national efforts to monitor, analyze, and combat corruption. From 2003 to 2004 it undertook studies of corruption in twelve Pacific Island countries in addition to two earlier studies on Fiji and Papua New Guinea. The organization’s aim is to facilitate effective national anti-corruption strategies. Transparency International studies focus on the National Integrity System (NIS), this being the sum total

of a country’s laws, institutions, and practices that maintain the accountability of public, private, and civil society organizations. The NIS approach assesses not only the formal structures but also how they function in practice, because the legal framework alone is often not a reflection of a country’s ability to prevent or combat corruption.

In line with the thematic focus of Transparency International’s 2004 Global Corruption Report, a 2004 NIS regional overview of the Pacific found that political corruption is the main cause for concern. This is the case with vote buying, other irregularities during elections, and parliamentary maneuvering for support by tenuous coalition governments. Government ministers are most at risk of corruption, due to their powers of regulation, licensing, granting tenders, public service recruitment, bestowal of scholarships, and access to perks such as travel allowances. At all levels of office, certain sectors are more vulnerable to corrupt activities, including police and customs, land administration, forestry and fisheries, ports, health and education, and retirement funds. Trade in the tokens of sovereignty, such as passports, letters of credit, Internet domain names, and offshore banking, are also problematic areas. On the positive side, the judiciary, electoral administration, and audit offices of most countries are remarkably free of corruption (Larmour and Barcham 2004).

There is much debate about the causes of corruption in the Pacific. The introduced capitalist economy and the associated values of individualism, materialism, and greed have contributed to the pursuit of personal

power and wealth that fuels corruption. In traditional societies leaders were limited in the amount of food, labor, or other goods they could access or use to curry influence, while such transactions were open and of modest proportions (Crocombe 2001, 516). By contrast, today's leaders can command formidable resources via government coffers, which are in turn replenished by income from natural resource exploitation and overseas aid. Preoccupation with the influence of traditional gift-giving cultures tends "to obfuscate the insidious reality of corruption. Customary gift giving is traditionally open within the clan, [but] its clandestine translation into politics or commerce" is quite a different matter (Findlay 2003, 115). Most commentators agree that the small scale of Pacific Island societies, especially elite networks, and the traditional emphasis on kinship and reciprocity have fostered tolerance of corruption.

International donors are clear about strategies to address corruption. Their prescriptions focus on strengthening and reforming democratic institutions, financial accountability, and the rule of law. These elements feature in the drive for good governance. Pacific countries, with the exception of Tonga, are democracies with independent judiciaries. All the micro-states have government auditors, and many have ombudsmen. Yet these agencies are poorly resourced and largely ineffective. Those auditors and ombudsmen who have called government to account tend to be ignored, while persistent critics are replaced by more compliant figures. Countries with a wide range of formal checks and balances, such as Solomon

Islands, Papua New Guinea, and Vanuatu, have had little success in reducing corruption. There have been calls to set up independent commissions against corruption in the Pacific, but unless such an agency is given financial and political support it is destined to be another lame duck. The need is not so much to create new laws or agencies as to more effectively apply existing ones (Larmour and Barcham 2004, 16).

Another approach has been to promote anti-corruption norms by setting up codes of conduct. The Pacific Islands Forum adopted eight principles of accountability in 1997, good governance was the first principle enunciated in the 2000 Biketawa Declaration, and 2003 saw the adoption of comprehensive Forum principles of good leadership. While these are useful goals, they rely on political or ethical obligation and are not legally binding. It is left to national executives and legislatures to apply the principles if, when, and how they see fit. Governments of some Pacific countries such as Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and Vanuatu have legislated their own leadership codes of conduct. Yet these regional and national approaches rely on leaders and members of parliament to do the right thing—which is unlikely given that many politicians engage in corruption.

In view of the inability or unwillingness of politicians to effectively apply anti-corruption measures to their subordinate officials, much less themselves, the impetus for change must come from outside the state. However, the problem lies not just with politicians and officials, as corruption is a two-way street. Citizens allow their votes to be bought, rela-

tives encourage nepotism, and companies offer bribes, while some non-governmental organizations have integrity problems of their own. A lack of transparency is not a major issue in small Pacific societies, as most people are well aware of who is corrupt (Larmour and Barcham 2004). Yet there is a high level of public tolerance toward the practice due to intimidation, apathy, or, in some cases, complicity. In this respect, accountability is also a two-way process, insofar as the public must demand that governments be accountable.

To be effective, norms against corruption must be developed and embraced at the grassroots level. Transparency International has highlighted the capacity for civil society to combat corruption: "Great responsibility rests with the regulatory potential of civil society in the Pacific, where governments resist accountability [and] the integrity of the public and private sectors are in question. . . . The media in particular play a crucial role in empowering civil society" (Findlay 2003, 124). A vigilant civil society in cooperation with an independent media can help to make anti-corruption laws work by condemning irregularities and monitoring enforcement (Transparency International 2004, 2). For example, an alliance involving the media, ombudsman, the local TI chapter, nongovernmental organizations, and business groups was established to target corruption during the 2002 PNG elections. A key finding of the 2004 National Integrity System report on the Pacific was that an effective anti-corruption strategy must focus less on the supply side of institutions and

laws and more on stimulating popular debate on minimal anti-corruption norms and parallel demand for their enforcement (Larmour and Barcham 2004).

The 2004 Forum exhorted members to sign and ratify the 2003 *United Nations Convention Against Corruption* (UNCAC). Unlike Forum principles, the UN treaty imposes a legal obligation to implement designated anti-corruption measures. By the end of 2004 there were 113 signatories and thirteen parties. Australia and New Zealand were the only Forum members to sign up. The treaty will enter into force three months after the thirtieth ratification. Member countries will be required to establish criminal offenses to cover a wide range of acts of corruption. Critically for the developing world, they agree to cooperate in prosecuting offenders, and ill-gotten gains will be returned to the countries from which they were stolen. An entire chapter of the convention focuses on preventive measures, including the need to raise public awareness and involve civil society (UNCAC 2003). The convention demonstrates a willingness by the international community to strengthen norms, laws, and prevention and enforcement strategies to tackle corruption. International law places normative pressure on Pacific governments even if they do not sign. Cooperation arising from this treaty, the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention, and the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime will also help to rein in transnational corporations and criminals that actively encourage corruption.

The incidence of corruption is linked to the spread and illicit use of

small arms in developing countries. In the Pacific and elsewhere, corruption and small arms proliferation are prevalent in the exploitation of natural resources. Poor management of this sector can provoke armed conflicts over valuable commodities, which in turn attract private and government security personnel. Security forces give protection to companies but are often implicated in illegal exploitation, corruption, and human rights abuses. Poorly paid and resourced security forces lack sufficient will and capacity either to prevent small arms leakage from armories or to retrieve illegal arms. Corrupt police and military personnel may even facilitate traffic in small arms for personal enrichment or empowerment of associates. As a result, common criminals, gangs seeking to influence elections, and parties to conflicts can gain access to guns. In weak states, especially those reliant on resource exploitation, these trends contribute to a spiraling cycle of lawlessness, violence, and recourse to small arms.

At a global level the spread and illicit use of small arms have had catastrophic consequences. "At least 500,000 people die every year as a result of the use of small arms and light weapons. Of the estimated 4 million war-related deaths during the 1990s, 90 percent of those killed were civilians, and 80 percent of these were women and children, mostly the victims of the misuse of small arms and light weapons. In addition, tens of millions more people have lost their livelihoods, homes and families because of the indiscriminate and pervasive use of these weapons" (Inoguchi 2003, 6). The global total of small

arms stands at 639 million, of which 387 million are in the hands of civilians, the equivalent of one private gun for every sixteen persons (Alpers and Twyford 2003, 12). Conflicts in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and, more recently, central Europe, account for the majority of illicit arms and their casualties, but no region is unaffected. Some developed countries like the United States have high rates of private gun ownership and crime involving arms.

"The Pacific" was always a misnomer, as in precolonial times bouts of tribal violence were not uncommon in the region, and some areas experienced colonization at gunpoint. Disturbingly, in the late twentieth century the region has succumbed to an escalation in conflict with firearms. The negative impacts of violence involving small arms are diverse and extreme. Direct effects include death, physical injury, human rights violations, forced displacement, psychological trauma, and violence against women. A culture of violence and lawlessness exacerbated by small arms has indirect and long-term deleterious effects on social and economic development. The resulting insecurity disrupts the funding and provision of essential services, deters investment, scares off tourists, and poses opportunity costs in the focus and delivery of overseas development assistance. Small arms also undermine democracy where they are used to deny civic rights, intimidate voters, extort resources from government, and usurp political power via a coup. In the Pacific these trends have been most evident in Melanesia, in both dependent territories and independent states.

Since West Papua was annexed

by Indonesia, there has been conflict between the Indonesian armed forces (TNI) and the secessionist Organization for a Free Papua (OPM). While the latter are small in number and poorly armed, their tenuous existence has provided a rationalization for deploying several thousand well-armed but undisciplined TNI forces. TNI elements have been linked to repression of indigenous civilians, including extrajudicial killings, particularly in the vicinity of natural resource projects. State violence has continued since Indonesia began its transformation to a democracy in 1998. There are also fears that armed militias from other parts of Indonesia may perpetrate nationalist-inspired violence against Papuans. Reform of and reduction in military forces coupled with strengthening of the police are essential to improve security in the troubled province. Unfortunately, the pressing issue of insecurity in Papua, including the effect of cross-border gun trafficking on Papua New Guinea, are not being addressed by the Forum and disappeared from the agenda altogether in 2004.

In New Caledonia, armed violence flared in the 1980s conflict between elements of the French community and indigenous Kanaks. The initial recourse to arms was by French civilians, but this was soon followed by the mass deployment of French troops. Peace was only achieved through a negotiated political settlement including territorial autonomy and the prospect of independence. The Forum has kept a watching brief on New Caledonia and granted it observer status. Regional scrutiny and engagement help to ensure that the territory does not relapse into armed

conflict. Yet New Caledonia remains the third most heavily armed entity in the Pacific Islands in terms of both military and civilian firearms. (Papua is excluded from the eighteen Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) surveyed [Alpers and Twyford 2004, 283]). New Caledonia should figure prominently in regional approaches to curb illicit traffic in and use of arms, but to date it has been excluded from such initiatives by the Forum.

The coups in Fiji in 1987 and 2000, and also the coup in Solomon Islands in 2000, epitomized the dangers posed by armed security forces in the Pacific. Elected governments were overthrown by small numbers of armed men from the military or police with varying support or acquiescence from those agencies. Periodic mutinies in the Papua New Guinea Defence Forces and Vanuatu's paramilitary suggest that these two states may be at risk of similar unconstitutional seizures of political power. The role of armed security forces is questionable in view of their being implicated in violence and intimidation against the state and civilians they are pledged to protect. In the nine-year armed conflict on Bougainville, the ill-disciplined PNG Defence Forces were more often part of the problem than the solution. Moreover, in Solomon Islands, Bougainville, and other parts of Papua New Guinea, the main source of weapons for militants and criminals has been poorly secured military or police armories.

The war on Bougainville caused the death of several thousand people, mainly civilians. Although the Solomon Islands conflict, with several hundred deaths, was far less lethal,



armed combatants and outright criminals caused a prolonged reign of terror and displaced twenty thousand people. In the wake of conflicts in Bougainville and Solomon Islands, disarmament has been the priority, to avoid a resumption of violence and diversion of arms to criminals or other regional conflicts. Successful disarmament requires inclusive peace negotiations, trust in fair procedures and outcomes, neutral peace brokers and monitors, and robust law enforcement. A critical factor is political will on the part of combatants, local communities, and regional partners, including a substantial commitment of resources by the latter. Attempts to disarm combatants in Pacific conflicts were not successful until all the above ingredients were in evidence (Hegarty 2004). Rearmament could still occur unless strategies are put in place for peaceful conflict resolution, equitable development, and effective control over small arms.

In Bougainville disarmament took several years, as it could only proceed in tandem with granting the province autonomy and a long-term commitment to a referendum on independence. In keeping with their side of the bargain, by October 2003 Bougainville combatants had surrendered 1,900 firearms to international peace monitors. In Solomon Islands the first international attempt at disarmament in 2001 achieved the surrender of over 1,000 firearms, but several hundred high-powered weapons were still in circulation. In the absence of a functioning state, it required concerted regional intervention in 2003, involving over 2,000 troops, police, and civilian personnel, to stop the

leakage of weapons from police armories and complete the disarmament process. After only five months the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) had collected 3,713 firearms, bringing the total to 6,000 guns surrendered in the space of three years. Despite these achievements, in Bougainville and Solomon Islands many weapons remain at large and there is a daunting challenge to reintegrate former combatants into productive social and economic life (Alpers and Twyford 2004, 296–300).

The current flashpoint for armed conflict in the Pacific is in the Highlands Provinces of Papua New Guinea. Philip Alpers has highlighted the magnitude of the problem. He identified a major shift in the arms used in conflicts, from bows and arrows to high-powered assault weapons. As a consequence the death rate has increased exponentially. In Enga Province alone, five hundred people died from firearms in 2003, and this figure could be an underestimate. The Southern Highlands is a hot spot, with more high-powered weapons already in circulation than there were in the Bougainville conflict. Most weapons were made in Australia or the United States and obtained illegally from police and military armories. Politicians are heavily implicated in the small arms trade. Since politicians began giving guns to their supporters before and after elections, the death rate has soared. Reconciliation, strengthening of police and armories, and disarmament for development are urgently needed in the Highlands. This should be a priority for Port Moresby and regional partners if a

conflagration is to be prevented (Alpers 2004).

The experience in Melanesia demonstrates that small arms in Island communities can cause devastating violence, lawlessness, and long-term damage to the society and economy. Full-blown conflicts aside, firearms also play a part in crime, including assassinations. In Sāmoa, a cabinet minister was assassinated with a gun in 1999; Kanak leaders Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Yeiwene Yeiwene were shot in 1989; and the same fate befell Palau's first President Remelik in 1985. Civilian gun ownership is highly variable in the Pacific. In tiny Niue almost 1 in 5 people owns a registered firearm, and Sāmoa's rate is over 1 in 10. Cook Islands' official rate is low but estimates suggest the actual rate could be as high as 1 gun per 15 persons. Officially New Caledonia is third highest, with a rate of 8.48 guns per 100 persons. Most other Pacific Islands have low rates of private gun ownership, and in Nauru, Palau, and the Marshall Islands firearms are banned. Yet government armories also pose a concern, in view of Melanesian precedents involving theft or misuse. Fiji, Vanuatu, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, New Caledonia, and French Polynesia have regular military forces, and police forces are routinely armed in the latter three countries, as well as in Solomon Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, and Wallis and Futuna (Alpers and Twyford 2004, 283–284, 300).

Weak Pacific Islands firearms legislation combined with poorly secured armories have made the region vulnerable to illicit traffic in small arms.

Most traffic has been within the region rather than from external sources, though this could easily change. Papua New Guinea advocated a regional approach to firearms control in 1996. As a result, the South Pacific Chiefs of Police Conference (SPCPC) produced the Honiara Initiative in 1998 in which Forum countries agreed in principle on measures to combat illicit traffic in firearms. At the directive of the 1999 Pacific Islands Forum, the SPCPC and Oceania Customs Organization met in Nadi to develop a common approach to weapons control. The key principles were that firearms possession is a privilege conditional on public safety and that stricter controls on firearms are needed. The practical measures included prohibited weapons; license conditions; gun registration, identification, and storage; training; border controls; and penalties (Alpers and Twyford 2003, 108–111).

The 2000 Forum adopted the Nadi framework for a regional strategy. Subsequently, the 2003 Forum approved a model Weapons Control Bill. In essence the model emulates Australian gun laws but can be adapted to national needs in the Pacific. The 2003 and 2004 Forums urged members to adopt the model law to the fullest extent possible. A series of regional workshops on small arms has built on the Nadi framework. Australia, Japan, and the United Nations hosted one meeting in Nadi in August 2004 to promote implementation of the model legislation in national jurisdictions. They also examined the need for improved security management at government armories.

In 2001, the first United Nations Small Arms Conference bolstered regional efforts to curb arms trafficking, when 150 countries adopted a detailed Programme of Action. It does not have the force of international law but includes politically binding national, regional, and global measures, many of which are either operative in the Pacific or envisaged in the Nadi framework and model legislation. Biennial UN meetings are to consider implementation of the program; the first such meeting was held in 2003. In the space of two years, significant progress was made across the world in public disclosures about and research on illicit small arms traffic. The chair of the biennial meeting commended regional cooperation, including in the Pacific. She highlighted the positive role of Pacific nongovernmental organizations in enhancing government understanding of the small arms problem and emphasized the role of aid donors in providing training, and financial and technical assistance (Inoguchi 2003, 7–13).

Australia and New Zealand have played a major part in post-conflict disarmament, promoting tougher gun controls, and strengthening armories in the Pacific. Australia has sought and is currently financing reform of PNG security forces and regional police. Aid donors could also set a positive example in their own firearms legislation and demonstrate restraint in their arms exports. Australians and New Zealanders rank among the most heavily armed civilians in the industrialized world, with rates of 11 and 22 legal guns per 100 people, respectively. Even this high rate pales alongside the US rate of 67 guns per 100

Americans; thus, 4 percent of the world's population possesses 50 percent of global private firearms. Australian legislation tightened up in the mid-1990s after a series of massacres shocked the government into action, but New Zealand and the United States have permissive gun laws. Moreover, the United States remains the largest exporter of small arms and ammunition to the Pacific Islands, with official export license approvals valued over US\$1.3 million from 1998 to 2000 alone (Alpers and Twyford 2004, 280–283). All three donors suspended military aid to Indonesian special forces after their implication in atrocities in East Timor, but an imminent resumption is premature in view of state violence in Papua. The nature and level of military aid to Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, and Vanuatu also warrants careful consideration.

To date, international approaches have primarily focused on the collection and destruction of illicit small arms. Yet due to a pervasive sense of insecurity in areas experiencing tensions and conflict, the demand for illicit arms can remain high. Apart from legislative approaches and other attempts to control—or indeed eliminate—supply, it is critical that national governments and aid donors support community-based efforts to peacefully resolve conflict and stem the demand for small arms. Regional and national strategies are also more likely to succeed if they actively incorporate women's groups in disarmament, coalition building, and conflict resolution (CASA 2003, 8–9).

Any account of what ails the Pacific and threatens its prospects for development must consider the rapidly

emerging threat of HIV/AIDS. The Australian government paints a grim picture of the global scope and socioeconomic impact of the disease: "The HIV/AIDS pandemic represents one of the greatest challenges facing developing countries. An estimated 38 million people are living with HIV/AIDS in developing countries. HIV/AIDS is increasing in the Asia Pacific region with about 7.4 million people currently affected. . . . HIV/AIDS threatens to reverse decades of hard-won development gains. It attacks people in their most productive years, destroys communities, and disrupts food production. Heavy burdens are placed on already weak health services. The disease cuts into the fabric of society and undermines a country's stability" (AusAID 2004).

The United Nations established the UNAIDS program in 1996 to lead worldwide advocacy and coordinate action against the disease. UN members agreed in the year 2000 on a set of eight Millennium Development Goals. The sixth goal is to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis, with a specific target of halting and beginning to reverse the incidence of these major diseases by 2015. In 2001 a UN General Assembly Special Session developed the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. A United Nations Global Fund was also established to fight AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. The World Trade Organization and the World Health Organization have been working to improve access to and affordability of HIV/AIDS anti-retroviral drugs for developing countries, albeit with disappointing results in the face of resistance from multinational drug companies. In the

Asia-Pacific region, governments have held ministerial meetings and a leadership forum on HIV/AIDS to facilitate information sharing and cooperation.

Notwithstanding major international campaigns in recent years, the response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic has been slow, often characterized as "too little, too late" in view of the magnitude of the threat. After the virus was first identified in the United States in 1981, developed countries were initially preoccupied with their own prevention and treatment programs. As a result, the incidence of HIV/AIDS is now declining in developed countries but is increasing exponentially in developing countries. The global community belatedly and, to date, ineffectually addressed the plight of Africa, which had already been afflicted by HIV/AIDS for several decades and accounts for the majority of victims. Later still Asia became cause for concern and action. The Pacific Islands region was among the last to receive concerted global attention and resources to combat the pandemic.

As of December 2003, a total of 8,260 HIV/AIDS cases were reported in the Pacific Islands. Papua New Guinea alone accounted for 7,320 cases, though this country's tally was based on 2001 figures and thus out of date. PNG and the Pacific statistics may greatly underestimate the incidence of the virus due to inconsistent reporting and AIDS not being recorded as the cause of death. After Papua New Guinea the highest rates of incidence were reported in New Caledonia, Guam, and French Polynesia in descending order, though absolute numbers were also high in Fiji (SPC

2004). A high incidence of HIV/AIDS correlates with the presence of military forces, perhaps due to their mobility and recourse to casual or transactional sex. For similar reasons relating to the merchant seaman profession, Kiribati and Tuvalu also have relatively high rates. The prominence of HIV/AIDS in French and US territories suggests not only that military bases have contributed to the problem, but also that association with a metropolitan power has failed to produce timely preventive measures.

The situation is dire in Papua New Guinea. AIDS is the major cause of death at the Port Moresby General Hospital, and reported cases are increasing by 15 to 30 percent a year. It is estimated that in 2020, the PNG working age population will be 13 percent lower than it would have been without the advent of HIV/AIDS. Heterosexual transmission is most common, with parent-to-child transmission the next most common form. HIV/AIDS is prevalent in the capital but also around primary industry sites. There are fears that similar patterns of behavior in Papua New Guinea will result in the pandemic there reaching sub-Saharan levels. As a result of the virus's scale and catastrophic implications for development in Papua New Guinea, Australia dedicated over a quarter of its international HIV/AIDS budget to the PNG National HIV/AIDS Support Project, amounting to A\$60 million from 2000 to 2004 (AusAID 2004).

The HIV/AIDS pandemic has also reached crisis proportions in the neighboring territory of West Papua. While noting that cases are under-reported, a US report details the

scope: "There are 1,125 currently registered cases of HIV/AIDS in Papua, 80 new cases are reported every month. . . . It is feared that as many as 5 percent of Papua's population is already infected" (CFR 2003, 77).

Whereas Papua accounts for less than 1 percent of Indonesia's population, it has approximately 40 percent of the nation's HIV/AIDS cases. Indigenous Papuans contract HIV at significantly higher rates than ethnic Indonesian residents. This discrepancy is attributed to the fact that government health and education campaigns actively discriminate against or simply do not reach indigenous Papuans.

"Without a more equitable and comprehensive response by the Indonesian government . . . HIV/AIDS is likely to become an epidemic that threatens the very survival of the Papuan people" (Yale Law School 2004, 36). The governor of Papua, Jaap Solossa, made the staggering estimate of 15,000 HIV/AIDS cases. He links this high incidence to illegal fisheries and logging activities by Thai and Malay companies in collusion with Indonesian military and police. Solossa ranks these interrelated issues as the most urgent challenge facing the province (AWPA 2004).

The remaining Pacific Islands have low rates of infection but there is no room for complacency. The Islands exhibit significant risk factors for the spread of HIV, including a youthful demographic profile, high rates of other sexually transmitted infections and teenage pregnancies, and considerable travel in and out of the region. In addition, the inequalities and violence experienced by many women and the variable access to health

services do not augur well for the prevention of HIV/AIDS (PASA 2004). Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands are at particularly high risk as teenage pregnancies have reached 20 percent of total births. One major obstacle to HIV/AIDS prevention in the Pacific and elsewhere is community fear and ignorance, compounded by prevailing notions of morality and sin. This has fueled perceptions that only certain types of people get HIV and has resulted in discrimination against HIV sufferers. Popular misconceptions point to the need for governments as well as community and church leaders to champion the HIV/AIDS prevention campaign.

Although the first case of HIV in the Pacific was identified in 1984, it was not until 1997 that the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) launched an initial regional education and prevention strategy. The Pacific Islands Forum put HIV/AIDS on its agenda in 2002 and expressed grave concerns about the rate of transmission and its impact on development. In 2003 the Forum leaders called for a new regional strategy to be ready by 2004. In January 2004 the French and Australian governments launched a major initiative to facilitate national and regional strategies. The 2004 Forum endorsed a comprehensive HIV/AIDS Regional Strategy (2004–2008) and tasked the Secretariat of the Pacific Community to develop a detailed plan of implementation (PIF 2004).

The geographic scope of the regional strategy is broad, as it encompasses twenty-one Pacific Island Countries and Territories. However, it is

flawed due to the arbitrary omission of West Papua. It makes no sense to include French and US dependencies but to exclude the poorest territory, which may already have the highest per capita incidence of HIV/AIDS. In view of Papua New Guinea's proximity to the Papuan capital Jayapura and southern-based resource projects (with their associated sex trade and higher incidence of HIV), the Papuan pandemic poses serious cross-border infection problems for neighboring Papua New Guinea.

Notwithstanding Papua's exclusion, the scope of new anti-HIV/AIDS campaigns in the Pacific gives grounds for cautious optimism. They focus on raising awareness among policymakers and community leaders, developing behavior change through education materials adaptable to local needs, and improving HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections surveillance capacity. The region-wide effort is complemented by national strategies supported by an A\$5 million grants scheme launched in August for government and civil society projects in Forum Island Countries. The scheme is coordinated from the Pacific Regional HIV/AIDS Project (PRHP) office in Suva. Activities feature training of HIV workers, HIV/AIDS testing, counseling and treatment, home care and support, and promoting behavior change with an emphasis on the "ABC" slogan: Abstain, Be faithful, (or use a) Condom! The main funding sources for the regional approach are the UNAIDS program, the UN Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (GFTAM), France, and Australia (PASA 2004).

In 2004 there was unprecedented

activity in the region to promote HIV/AIDS awareness, education, and cooperation. It began with a World Council of Churches Pacific Members' Consultation (29 March–1 April). The resulting Nadi Declaration advocated greater activism by the churches. It included the admission: "We the churches, are encouraged to seek forgiveness from God and from (HIV) Positive People, for not doing what we ought to have done, and for contributing to their pain and suffering." They recognized the need for churches to create a caring and tolerant environment for HIV sufferers and to improve knowledge, including open discussion of sexuality. In a bold stand, the declaration vowed not to oppose the use of condoms given their proven utility as an HIV/AIDS prevention method (PASA 2004). The Nadi Declaration was refreshingly progressive, but it remains to be seen whether it will be taken up at the parish level.

In mid-July the xv International AIDS Conference was held in Bangkok with 15,000 attendees, including strong representation from across the Pacific. Thailand provides an inspiring example of a concerted official strategy to combat HIV/AIDS. As a result of a nationwide campaign of awareness raising and condom distribution, Thailand saw its infection rate drop from 143,000 in 1993 to only 19,000 in 2003 (PASA 2004). Representatives of People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) issued the Bangkok Declaration at their Second Asia Pacific Congress prior to the official AIDS conference. It called for greater PLWHA involvement in campaigns to raise awareness and combat the

stigma of HIV/AIDS. They also called for universal access to counseling and treatment, legal reforms, and social security support for affected families (PLWHA 2004).

Later in July, the Ninth Pacific Arts Festival, held in Palau, made HIV/AIDS education and prevention a focus of its activities. *Pacific Magazine* also made HIV/AIDS the theme of its July issue. The cover headline posed the grim question: "HIV/AIDS—Is the Pacific the next Africa?" SPC Director General Lourdes Pangelinan warned that the Pacific faced a HIV/AIDS threat similar to the one Africa confronted twenty years ago. She forecast that the "tuberculosis (TB) and HIV co-infection . . . could soon become the leading cause of death in the Pacific . . . The threat to our societies is real" (*PM*, July 2004).

A strong commitment to the anti-HIV/AIDS campaign is evident among people living with HIV/AIDS, nongovernmental organizations, UN agencies, aid donors such as France and Australia, and, increasingly, Pacific governments themselves. Unfortunately, not all players in global politics have lent their support to effective HIV/AIDS prevention strategies. The Bush administration in the United States, heavily influenced by the New Christian Right, is averse to promoting condoms as a means of family planning or HIV/AIDS prevention. Many conservative Islamic states have taken a similar stance, as has the Vatican. Indeed, the Pope explicitly confirmed the Catholic prohibition on condoms in January 2005. The United States, Islamic states, and the Vatican hold the view that sex education and condom pro-

motion encourage sex outside marriage. All three advocate “Abstinence” and “Being faithful” but not “Condoms,” thus omitting a key element of the AIDS prevention slogan, ABC. This “unholy alliance,” as critics dubbed it, has obstructed initiatives to promote safe sex, including at key UN conferences on women and reproduction (Chappell 2004). If these powerful forces were to give genuine support to the Millennium Development Goal of halting the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015, that goal might be achievable.

Corruption, small arms, and HIV/AIDS pose a severe threat to Pacific societies and economies. Moreover, these phenomena are linked. This is most evident in relation to natural resource projects where competition over the spoils provokes corruption, armed conflict, and other crimes. Isolated resource workers, military personnel, and armed combatants are more likely to engage in high-risk sexual behavior, which spreads HIV/AIDS. In general, high levels of corruption and armed conflict divert attention and resources from development, including HIV/AIDS prevention. However, these scourges on society are not amenable to simply being outlawed. This is partly because many political leaders and officials set a poor example. They are often implicated in corruption—and in Melanesia—illicit traffic in small arms, despite legislation to prevent this. Moreover, they too may suffer from popular misconceptions about HIV/AIDS. Effectively combating these negative trends requires awareness raising and education to strengthen values, alter norms, and induce volun-

tary changes to behavior. If leaders are not prepared to instigate such campaigns, grassroots efforts must advocate and develop them.

The international community can assist the region in combating corruption, small arms, and HIV/AIDS in several ways. Already international codes, laws, and conditional aid are used to pressure and encourage Pacific governments to adopt appropriate norms and measures. Regional intervention and aid projects have increasingly addressed the three issues. However, aid donors must avoid the temptation to seek quick cures for these ills, notably via national legislation, and must instead place more emphasis on long-term prevention strategies driven by civil society. Donors can assist by providing resources to facilitate regional cooperation (including Papua) and, most importantly, community activism in all three domains. This approach is now evident in the campaign against HIV/AIDS but must be sustained over the long haul. In addition, there is an urgent need for the region’s external partners to crack down on transnational resource companies that exacerbate the incidence of corruption and conflict. The nature and scale of legal small arms exports to the Pacific, both civil and military, also warrant consideration, given their diversion to illicit purposes.

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